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AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY

THE END OF PRIMACY?

by

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Biography

Lt Col Carey J. Jones is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. She is a senior pilot in the air superiority F-15C and a former Weapons System Officer in the multi-role F-15E with more than 1,900 flying hours. Lt Col Jones was commissioned in 1996 with a degree in Mathematics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has had flying assignments in North Carolina, Alaska, and Nevada and has flown combat missions in Operations NORTHERN WATCH, SOUTHERN WATCH, and ENDURING FREEDOM. She commanded the 561 Joint Tactics Squadron at Nellis Air Force Base and her staff assignments include Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Operational Requirements in Air Combat Command and CJTF-1 Deputy Shift Director in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. She earned a Master of Science degree in Military Arts and Science as a distinguished graduate of Air Command and Staff College.

Abstract

A review of current American strategic guidance and foreign policy choices reveals two conflicting grand strategies of retrenchment and primacy. Although President Obama's administration acknowledges a shift in the international order, U.S. strategic guidance clings to an outdated strategy of primacy while simultaneously pursuing retrenchment. There is no cohesive synchronization of the two strategies. Examined through the examples of Iraq and China, it is clear that when put into action, the grand strategy fails and actually undermines America's strategic efforts. The United States has a unique opportunity in the next two years to reevaluate our grand strategy and move toward a more appropriate strategy for a multipolar global environment.

INTRODUCTION

Grand strategy is the foundation of successful national security and the pursuit of national interests. Developing a grand strategy is a difficult endeavor and despite the arduous rigor required, the results are easily criticized in hindsight. Many critics today argue the United States has no grand strategy,¹ an argument further fueled by some of President Barack Obama's own statements.² However, a review of strategic guidance and foreign policy choices reveals quite the opposite. The primary problem facing President Obama's administration is that it is pursuing too many strategies that both lack prioritization and coherent action.

WORKING DEFINITION OF GRAND STRATEGY

It is essential before analyzing our current grand strategy to begin with a working definition of that phrase. Merriam Webster defines the term strategy as “a careful plan or method for achieving particular goal usually over a long period of time.”³ Originally derived from the Greek word for generalship, strategy normally refers to military plans that incorporate military tactics to achieve an overall objective.⁴ As nation states developed and pursued objectives utilizing every element of state power, a term was needed to encompass the use of strategy beyond merely the battlefield. In the same way that military theorist Carl von Clausewitz explained that war was politics by other means, politics encompasses war, or the use of military force, diplomatic endeavors, economic actions, and the use of information. Historian and noted strategist B.H. Liddell Hart posits, “the role of grand strategy – higher strategy – is to coordinate and direct all the resources of a nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war – the goal defined fundamental policy. Grand strategy should both calculate and develop the economic resources and man-power of nations in order to sustain the fighting services.”⁵ Although some historians assert military application is the primary focus,⁶

grand strategy extends well beyond this and outlines the ends, ways, and means necessary to attain national objectives in the pursuit of vital interests in peacetime and during war. Put another way, political scientist Barry Posen maintains that the four functions of a comprehensive grand strategy are to prioritize scarce resources, coordinate activities across organizations, deter or persuade potential adversaries, and enable internal accountability.⁷

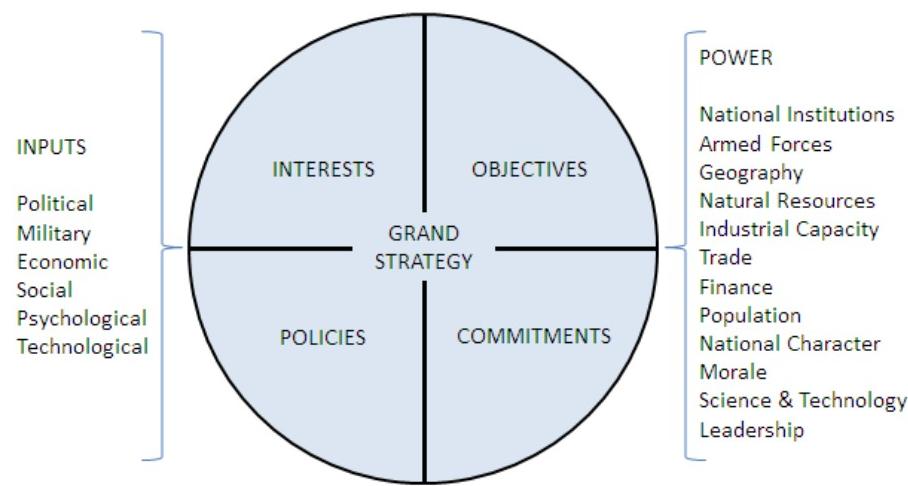


Figure 1. Relationship of power (means), inputs (ways), and ends (interests, etc.)⁸

With this explanation in mind, the most useful construct for analyzing the current administration's grand strategy comes from renowned strategist Richard Rumelt. He offers a simplified process through which a nation might generate a grand strategy using three steps: diagnosis, guiding principles, and coherent action. The first step in this process requires a comprehensive analysis of the context by asking, "what is going on here?"⁹ In the case of grand strategy, this refers to the global environment. The next step requires guiding principles that "direct and constrain action without fully defining its content."¹⁰ This is a particularly difficult task because too detailed an approach can lower the level of the policy or constrain its application only to a particular situation. Too broad an approach without making tough choices enables universal application, but provides no focus or prioritization, thus making it useless. The

final step of a coherent grand strategy, and arguably the most crucial, is to create a plan of action in a consistent and coordinated fashion.¹¹

DIAGNOSIS & MODERN AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY

The United States is in a difficult time of transition. The era is difficult to define because there are so many conflicting opinions of just what the transition might be. Although the international world order has benefited the United States since World War II, many critics agree there is a change occurring. The trends of globalization and economic interdependence have started a shift away from America's singular advantage in the post-Cold War unipolar global order to a multipolar future.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, America's role in the international community needed reevaluation. No longer defined by a singularly dangerous primary threat to the United States and its interests, the new international landscape opened up many opportunities for the remaining superpower. In this relatively unobstructed environment, the United States opted for a strategy of primacy, which sought to maintain America's preeminence whilst prohibiting "the emergence of any potential future global competitor."¹² However, as the international context shifts, the strategy of primacy appears to have run its course. As political science and national security professors Barry Posen and Andrew Ross surmise, "primacy is probably unsustainable and self-defeating. Primacy is little more than a rationale for the continued pursuit of Cold War policy and strategy in the absence of an enemy."¹³

Despite the hegemony America has enjoyed for the past quarter of a century, a shift has begun. Joseph Nye, author of the notion of "smart power," describes three dimensions of power: military, economic, and transnational relations, where power is simultaneously unipolar, multipolar, and diffuse.¹⁴ While the United States currently maintains a leadership role

throughout all of Nye's three dimensions, the latter two dimensions already display a different power distribution than previously understood. Militarily, the United States remains the most powerful nation in the world, with no immediate concern for losing that position.¹⁵ Political scientist Nuno Monteiro explains this power advantage when he describes unipolarity as "a configuration of the international system in which there is an imbalance of military power favoring one state - the unipole."¹⁶

The other domains are not so "singular," however. After the recent financial crisis, the country's GDP-to-debt ratio spiked to 101.53%, minimizing national-level monetary reserves and Washington's ability to bounce back from any subsequent economic crises.¹⁷ Although some critics downplay the importance of this ratio as an effective gauge of our economic health, it is a widely held economic barometer for national fiscal responsibility. As the European Union continues to develop and the Chinese and Indian economies grow, the United States will be more vulnerable to external influences. The concerns of climate change, water scarcity, natural resource management, and global terrorism span state and non-state actors alike and will create a much flatter distribution of power. As a result, while the United States remains relatively sure not to lose its military advantage in the near term, economically and globally we need to "cope with the 'rise of the rest' - among both state and non-state actors."¹⁸

Although these are not harbingers of the end of American power or influence, we should note the new context of our international relationships and reassess our grand strategy as we move toward multipolarity with progressively fiscally constrained options available. Washington's decreasing ability to enforce its agenda internationally and the exorbitant costs of nation building make maintaining the status quo impossible, therefore requiring a more nuanced strategy. We must clearly define our interests and then determine what threatens those interests

and whether or not hegemony is required, or even advisable, to secure those interests.

In this respect, the President's National Security Strategy (NSS) published in 2010 offers a wide-ranging diagnosis of the global environment by acknowledging risks while articulating that other factors, such as peace between major powers and global economic growth, contribute to a more integrated world. The NSS rightfully recognizes the dangers of state and non-state actors along with the global unrest that could result from nontraditional security issues, such as water shortages and climate change.¹⁹ Nevertheless, a panel of three former Secretaries of State, Henry Kissinger (1973-1977), George Schultz (1982-1989), and Madeleine Albright (1997-2001), testified before a congressional committee that the current administration had not addressed the world context and emerging threat strategically enough. They agreed that "we are living through a moment of monumental world change" and that "old orders are collapsing while any new stability has yet to emerge."²⁰

During this transitional period, it is important that the president get America's strategy right and clearly articulate it. As political scientist Daniel Drezner points out, "there are moments when grand strategies really do count: during times of radical uncertainty in international affairs."²¹ Although we cannot effectively predict when the transition to multipolarity will be complete or what a "new stability" may resemble, a coherent grand strategy is even more important in this environment. The shift to a new global environment intensifies the dangers resulting from the inconsistencies found in current U.S. grand strategy.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A review of key government documents as well as the contemporary political discourse reveals an Obama Administration grand strategy comprised of two competing strategies: penitent primacy and retrenchment. The first strategy is "penitent" in that it pursues the same primacy

agenda as previous administrations, but with an apologetic stance intended to rebuild perceived strained international relationships and distance the current administration from that of George W. Bush. This strategy's guiding principles aim to reduce unilateral American action, increase U.S. international leadership, and actively promote American values abroad. The concurrent retrenchment agenda seeks to avoid military engagement in order to focus resources and political capital primarily on rebuilding American strength at home by stabilizing the economy, improving education, and transforming health care.

The Obama Administration's 2010 NSS highlights the three enduring vital interests of the U.S. (security of the US, economic prosperity, and liberty) and adds a number of other interests. In addition to the security of the U.S. overall, it adds the security of our citizens abroad, as well as that of our allies and partners. To economic prosperity, it adds an open international economic system. With respect to our values, the NSS widens the respect for these values from simply "at home" to around the world. Although it is understandable that we would want the world to share our values, raising the spread of our values to the level of national interest requires action or at least response on the part of the US whenever a value is threatened. The desire to take our values abroad also reflects an old debate between the moral role America should play internationally.

Historian Walter McDougall describes this enduring debate as one between adherents to the vision of the country as either the Promised Land or those who see us as a Crusader State. He explains that John Quincy Adams believed America to be a city on a hill, a nation the world would seek to follow by our example and ideals. This vision began to change during William McKinley's administration and reached fruition as a Crusader State, motivated by asserting our values and principles abroad, under Woodrow Wilson's administration and the aftermath of

WWI. Although Wilson felt a responsibility to act on behalf of the global good, claiming, “it was dangerous, unfair, and disgraceful to pursue a foreign policy based on material self-interest,”²² Adams sought to use the pursuit of national interest not purely using realist principals, but rather to preserve our values by making the United States something worth emulating.²³ This debate continues today; McDougall aptly notes that “while America the Promised Land had held that to try to change the world was stupid (and immoral), America the Crusader State held that to refrain from trying to change the world was immoral (and stupid).”²⁴ The Obama Administration’s choice of language in the NSS reflects a turn away from the Crusader State mentality. Although the NSS continues to recommend supporting these values abroad, it specifically seeks to promote “universal values abroad by living them at home, and will not seek to impose these values through force.”²⁵

While these interests may not be unique to this administration, the addition of “an international order advanced by U.S. leadership”²⁶ clearly promotes a continued strategy of primacy. This administration pursues this primacy primarily through a liberal institutionalist’s philosophy of strengthening international institutions while further binding the United States to these institutions. It places the responsibility of international world order squarely on the shoulders of the United States, clearly indicating a sustained strategy of primacy. Additionally, the Obama Administration seeks to renew America’s global leadership and to “continue to underwrite global security.”²⁷ The shift towards multipolarity requires a shift in our strategy, one that evolves beyond primacy.²⁸ As Dr. Christopher Layne, national security expert, explains, “attempting to maintain U.S. hegemony is self-defeating because it will provoke other states to balance against the United States, and result in the depletion of America’s relative power – thereby leaving it worse off than it would have been accommodating multipolarity.”²⁹

On the other hand, repeated references in the 2010 NSS to education, domestic economic strength, and even health care mark a turn towards retrenchment. The President campaigned on retrenchment through his promises to get out of Iraq and wrap up the war in Afghanistan as quickly as possible in order to shift financial resources toward domestic goals. By focusing domestically, he sought to decrease our debt, build our economic viability, decrease unemployment, increase graduation rates, increase health coverage, and decrease our dependence on foreign oil.³⁰ Additionally, his call for multilateralism both in the NSS and in his major speeches not only sought to improve international relationships, but also to reduce the burden on America of the costs associated with managing issues that may not be directly wedded to our national interests, beyond those that strengthen our allies. As one of President Obama's top national security advisors summarized, "If you were to boil [his strategy] all down to a bumper sticker, it's 'Wind down these two wars, reestablish American standing and leadership in the world, and focus on a broader set of priorities, from Asia and the global economy to a nuclear-nonproliferation regime.'"³¹ The language seems to promote a home-first focus on education and domestic economic recovery without offering a lessened commitment to promoting international security, leading international coalitions and deploying military forces worldwide. The desire for retrenchment does not appear to come at the expense of American leadership worldwide or a reduction in the extension of our universal values abroad.

The simultaneous pursuit of retrenchment and engagement puts the two at odds with each other in the absence of clear prioritization. By removing some of the stronger unilateral language found in the Bush Administration's security policies, the 2010 NSS attempts to distance itself from the previous administration, but it does not materially reduce our potential future international commitments. The guidance does not clearly articulate which is more important –

the international leadership of the United States or the strength of our nation domestically; rather, it states the latter enables the former. If the NSS also included a prioritization between penitent primacy and retrenchment or provided clearer criteria for determining American involvement in future security issues, it could outline a more pragmatic approach to the ongoing shift towards multipolarity. The lack of prioritization, however, avoids the tough decisions of allocating constrained resources and provides no guidance to those who must enact the strategy.

If one held that the application of military force was the primary focus of grand strategy, the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) or the Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG) could assist in providing that prioritization. However, neither of these documents provided such guidance and leaves the prioritization of resources to congressional action.³² Even though the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) applied priorities consistent with our vital interests and the broad range of goals highlighted in the NSS in his Chairman's Assessment, his influence is not sufficient to force the rest of the administration to apply the same rationale diplomatically, economically and throughout the information realm. The lack of commensurate funding by Congress, especially of military resources, exacerbates the lack of strategic coherence. As an independent national defense review panel observed, “the capabilities and capacities rightly called for in the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review… clearly exceed the budget resources made available to the Department.”³³ Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger highlighted this lack of funding, made worse by sequestration, and its detrimental effect on security during recent testimony before Congress. He emphasized that America “should have a strategy-driven budget, not a budget-driven strategy.”³⁴ Essentially, the QDR reflects the administration’s strategic inconsistency: “the broad-based strategy set forth in the QDR increases the demands across strategy, capability, and capacity, thus widening the disconnect between America’s strategic

objectives and the realities of budget constraints and available forces.”³⁵

A cohesive grand strategy is further weakened by the DSG, a document that seeks to use the NSS as a foundation to inform Department of Defense strategic planning, and therefore the QDR as well. The DSG focuses on military capabilities required for general security rather than providing a more specific vision of the president’s grand strategy and its execution through the military instrument of power. The DSG has been praised by top Department of Defense officials involved in its development for the mere value of the planning to create an agreed upon rationale amongst the participants.³⁶ However, the document itself is not useful for guidance for anyone outside of the planning participants because it broadly brushes a security environment that requires fighting terrorism, rebalancing towards the Pacific, and stability in the Middle East, without prioritizing threats and the capabilities required to meet those threats. The effective planning process mitigated some risk by providing a shared vision amongst the planners themselves, but the turnover of government employees makes this temporary gain personality-deep and quickly diminished.

Based solely on analyzing documents issued by this administration, another interpretation of the administration’s current grand strategy is that it is a form of pragmatic selective engagement. Using this rationale, the United States would use its current position to prepare itself for a future multipolar international system. While not actively seeking to maintain or expand our hegemony as a primacy-based strategy would, this rational seeks to undertake a transition to a selective engagement strategy without overly alarming the world community over perceived U.S. disengagement. In order to dissuade action on the part of rogue actors and to assure our allies that we remain dedicated to existing commitments, this strategy requires maintaining a strong military force capable of global power projection throughout the current

transitional period and beyond. Interpreters of key strategic documents would likely deduce from the resulting language a continued American pursuit of primacy. Despite the primacy-focused language in the documents, this approach would be coordinated with aggressive diplomatic engagement and synchronized economic measures to cultivate changing relationships and international responsibilities to facilitate a U.S.-led transition to multi-polarity without turmoil. This strategy would require key leaders across the government to align completely to achieve the nuanced approach of a selective engagement transition under the guise of committed, albeit less provocative, primacy.

In the case of the current administration, however, selective engagement is not the intended strategy. Strategic leaders' inconsistency in execution and the President's disjointed responses indicate conflicting strategies. The lack of coherence and prioritization inhibits unity of effort at best; at worst, it puts the use of limited resources completely at odds without direct presidential oversight. The President's determination to do more with less without prioritization forces policy makers to attempt to accomplish national objectives (ends) only as much as resources (means) allow and indicates a reactive, short-sighted focus and lack of long-term vision. He does not pay equal attention to the ends and means, something historian John Gaddis points out as a major inhibitor to cohesive grand strategy. "Where that does not exist – where... means attract greater attention than ends – then what one has is not so much bad strategy as no strategy."³⁷ If there was an underlying rationale in attempting to shift towards selective engagement without overly alarming the international community, the principal leaders responsible for shepherding that approach are either not aware or failed to properly execute the strategy. Without the prioritization in the administration's guiding principles, once the huge organization of the US government attempted to put the diverging strategies of penitent primacy

and retrenchment into action, the two strategies diffused resources and muddled our foreign policy.

COHERENT ACTION

President Obama's parallel strategies of retrenchment and penitent primacy have become more at odds with one another as his administration has continued, resulting in conflicting actions and strategic failure. Coined "multilateral retrenchment" by political scientist Daniel Drezner,³⁸ President Obama's first strategy prioritized his desire to focus on domestic issues after a controversial war in Iraq over a more prudent reduction of overseas military commitments. However, his attempt to retrench and therefore redirect resources toward domestic challenges as well as reorient America's primary foreign focus to the Asia-Pacific region has not been successful thus far.

Upon entering office, the President faced ongoing hostilities in Iraq, a war to which he was opposed even though he did not in 2003 hold a senate seat that would have enabled him to vote against it. Despite this, the President's desire to focus on domestic issues drew his attention away from Iraq. Iraqi's Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki's arrest of Sunni Awakening fighters, the disqualification of more than 500 primarily Sunni candidates to run in Iraq's March 2010 elections, al Maliki's disregard of the same election's results and 18-month expulsion of Sunni political leaders went unchecked and without public rebuke by the U.S. administration.³⁹

As the Brookings Institution's Kenneth Pollack stated, the Administration's lack of engagement implied "that the United States under the new Obama administration was no longer going to enforce the rules of the democratic road... [This] undermined the reform of Iraqi politics and resurrected the specter of the failed state and the civil war."⁴⁰ Despite congressional and public criticism of al Maliki that began well before 2009,⁴¹ the President continued to praise

the Iraqi leader publically without actively either mentoring or reining him in, further aggravating an already deteriorating situation in Iraqi politics. The distrust most Iraqis felt toward their government, combined with the appearance of American approval, infuriated Iraqi Sunnis and encouraged the renewal and rapid growth of a sectarian and increasingly radical Islamist insurgency. The complete U.S. military withdrawal Obama touted in the 2012 campaign “exacerbated a diplomatic withdrawal that had been underway since Obama took office.”⁴² He may have inherited a war he did not want, but the President abdicated responsibility for securing stability within Iraq in an effort to focus domestically. When combined with our foray into Libya, the disregard of his own Syrian “red line,” and the lack of any consistent effort to manage the Arab Spring, President Obama’s policies weakened the broader Middle East, fueled the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), the radical insurgency in Syria and Iraq, and undermined his own goal of retrenchment. Simply put, he had not earned the right to retrench.

President Obama’s second strategic component, penitent primacy, has not succeeded in its execution in the Pacific, and specifically with China. The Administration’s mixed messaging between public statements, the highly touted military Pacific “rebalance,” and reported economic engagement in the midst of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) have confused many critics and, most importantly, China. As Cato Institute senior fellow and *The National Interest* contributing editor, Ted Carpenter, observed, “The Obama administration’s policy toward China is either a clumsy attempt at deception or an extraordinary case of self-deception.”⁴³

When former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the “pivot to the Pacific” in 2011, the Administration stressed increased U.S. investment and the overall importance of engagement in the region, especially with a rising China. Her article focused on American leadership in the region based on aggressive engagement by top-level officials, what the

Secretary termed “forward-deployed diplomacy.”⁴⁴ This was a key element of the strategy aimed at discouraging China from misperceiving our increased presence, particularly with military forces, in the region that might compel Beijing to counterbalance U.S. influence. In effect, if primacy was not the intended strategy, diplomacy was needed to offset the perception of what Posen identified as “an effort to initiate a Cold War style containment strategy of China, one based on U.S. political and military leadership of an opposing coalition.”⁴⁵

However, the contradictory actions of the Administration have either undermined attempts to ease Chinese perceptions through diplomacy or betrayed the intent to contain the rise of China. The release of the Department of Defense’s Air-Sea Battle initiative clearly invites the Chinese to assume the United States might not respect China’s sovereignty or its own regional security. Although intended to increase Navy and Air Force integration while reinforcing diplomacy with military capability, the Air-Sea Battle concept can “easily [be] read as an offensive military strategy to deny China the ability to defend itself against U.S. air, sea, and nuclear attack through sustained offensive operations against the Chinese mainland.”⁴⁶ The NSS aggravates this confusion by seeking a positive relationship with China while monitoring their military for ways America should respond.⁴⁷

Despite the former Secretary of State’s seven visits to the region, the diplomatic engagement was not “forward” enough to overcome China’s perception of increased military attention and containment. Steven Harner, a businessman and former State Department official, observed that “[t]he first Obama term was disastrous for U.S-China relations. Hillary Clinton’s State Department... seemed to outsource policy-making toward Asia to the Pentagon.”⁴⁸ Beginning with the new Secretary of State, John Kerry, along with other officials who left key positions, critics decry Obama’s lack of Chinese experts on his foreign and security policy

team.⁴⁹ While calling China a “cooperative partner” in security, the United States based additional Marines in Australia. “All of the US moves have a common denominator: they involve significant security ties with countries that are hostile to China or at least worry greatly about the growth of Chinese power in East Asia.”⁵⁰

The United States needs to reevaluate our understanding of China, establish a clearer strategy, and determine how it applies to the Pacific. Notwithstanding a few foreign policy experts who believe that China can rise peacefully within a model of international liberal institutionalism,⁵¹ it is not likely China will choose to remain in such a U.S.-designed regional or global construct. Not only do the Western security concepts contradict their basic philosophy of world order,⁵² assuming China will continue to be satisfied with a Westphalia-influenced international structure puts the responsibility for American strategic success completely on China. Additionally, although they strive to bolster economic growth and protect their sovereignty, the Chinese are not seeking a global leadership role. The Chinese believe they have the ability to use their power to influence international dealings in their favor without seeking a leadership role they fundamentally believe to be superfluous or even unwise.⁵³ With this context in mind, Carpenter asserts that “congagement,” the contradictory and simultaneous containment of and engagement with China, needs to be replaced with a more coherent strategy.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

Granting Iraq and China are but two examples of President Obama’s grand strategy in execution, they epitomize the danger of putting contradictory guiding principles into action. Although his administration seemed to diagnose a complex and changing world context appropriately, the lack of a unified strategy or cohesive set of guiding principles resulted in conflicting, rather than coherent, action. If President Obama sought a more pragmatic approach

with the flexibility afforded by two strategies at odds - penitent primacy and retrenchment - he failed to provide the strategic oversight required to weave such a difficult approach into coherent action. As Harvard historian, Niall Ferguson, aptly noted "Grand strategy is all about the necessity of choice... The defining characteristic of Obama's foreign policy has been not just a failure to prioritize, but also a failure to recognize the need to do so."⁵⁵

As America prepares for a different administration, the next couple of years are crucial for the future security and pursuit of our national interests. A fundamental review of U.S. grand strategy is necessary in order to determine how we interpret our enduring national interests, whether fostering the Crusader State mentality is beneficial, and if hegemony is required, or even advisable, to safeguard our national interests in a multipolar and interdependent world. Akin to Eisenhower's Solarium Project,⁵⁶ a presidentially endorsed review by academic, political, economic, business, and military experts along with our closest strategic allies would better propose a comprehensive vision for our country than the current process employed largely within the national security apparatus of the federal bureaucracy. The participants must span the range of philosophical and political thought in the country with a focused examination of what we are as an international actor and where we are going as a nation. Presidential endorsement is critical in order to endow the project with the proper importance and provide public accountability. This vision would then serve as the foundation for future strategic guidance, planning and ultimately success.

Rather than choosing retrenchment or primacy, America could move toward selective engagement with a cohesive guiding vision linked directly to our national interests. Recognizing the shift toward multipolarity, the United States must consider the exorbitant costs of maintaining primacy in the emerging world order and that the benefits of hegemony are often

oversold.⁵⁷ It is time for America to contemplate an alternative to primacy by “consciously sacrifice[ing] some of the prestige of being the unipolar behemoth, in return for a more ‘free hand’ strategically, shouldering less of the burden of international security and addressing the strategic deficit not with a larger military, but a smaller policy.”⁵⁸

¹ While there are more, some examples include Rumelt, *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy*, 33; Zelleke and Zorn, “Where’s the Strategy?,” 1; and Nasr, “The Grand Strategy Obama Needs,” 1 (in reference to the crises in Ukraine and Iraq).

² Examples include “I don’t really even need George Kennan right now” to the New Yorker and his off-the-cuff remark “we don’t have a strategy yet” while awaiting more information on military options for ISIS.

³ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/strategy>

⁴ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/strategy>

⁵ Hart, *Strategy*, 335-6.

⁶ Art, *A Grand Strategy for America*, 2.

⁷ Posen, *Restraint*, 4-5.

⁸ Collins, *Grand Strategy*, 2.

⁹ Rumelt, *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy*, 79.

¹⁰ Rumelt, *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy*, 84.

¹¹ Rumelt, *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy*, 91.

¹² Posen, *Restraint*, 8.

¹³ Posen and Ross, *America’s Strategic Choices*, 41.

¹⁴ Nye, *The Future of Power*, xv.

¹⁵ <http://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.asp>, accessed 28 Dec 14.

¹⁶ Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics*, 117.

¹⁷ <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/united-states/government-debt-to-gdp>, accessed 28 Dec 14. Others believe this to be too conservative a view and believe that we shouldn’t include national income that is not readily available for the government’s use. For more information see <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorffman/2014/07/12/forget-debt-as-a-percent-of-gdp-its-really-much-worse/>, also accessed 28 Dec 14.

¹⁸ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 234.

¹⁹ Obama, *National Security Strategy 2010*, 8.

²⁰ Noonan, “America’s Strategy Deficit,” 1.

²¹ Drezner, “Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy?”, 3.

²² McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*, 130.

²³ McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*, 36.

²⁴ McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*, 205.

²⁵ Obama, *National Security Strategy 2010*, 5.

²⁶ Obama, *National Security Strategy 2010*, 7.

²⁷ Obama, *National Security Strategy 2010*, 1.

²⁸ Nye, *The Future of Power*, xii, xvii.

²⁹ Layne, *America’s Strategic Choices*, 126.

³⁰ Obama, *State of the Union Addresses*, given 28 January 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/28/president-barack-obamas-state-union-address>, and 20 January 2015,

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/20/remarks-president-state-union-address-january-20-2015>, accessed 30 January 2015.

³¹ Ben Rhodes, Obama’s deputy national security adviser for strategic communications as quoted by Drezer, “Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy?”, 4.

³² The Chairman’s Assessment in the back of the QDR is an attempt by the CJCS to remedy this vacuum. Using the NSS as a foundation, it connects the national interests of the NSS and provides a prioritization for resources and effort. According to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, our defense priorities are:

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- a. The Survival of the Nation;
 - b. The prevention of catastrophic attack against U.S. territory;
 - c. The security of the global economic system;
 - d. The security, confidence, and reliability of our allies;
 - e. The protection of American citizens abroad; and
 - f. The preservation and extension of universal values.

This prioritization would be more useful across all elements of grand strategy if the prioritization were endorsed by Presidential approval and applied across the government.

³³ Perry and Abizaid, *Ensuring a Strong US Defense for the Future*, viii.

³⁴ Noonan, “America’s Strategy Deficit,” 1.

³⁵ Perry and Abizaid, *Ensuring a Strong US Defense for the Future*, 21-22.

³⁶ Comments made by DoD strategist during GSS trip to DC, 17 Dec 2014.

³⁷ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 271.

³⁸ Drezer, “Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy? Why We Need Doctrines in Uncertain Times,” 1.

³⁹ Beinart, “Obama’s Disastrous Iraq Policy,” 2 and Posen, *Restraint*, 49.

⁴⁰ Kenneth Pollack, as quoted by Peter Beinart, “Obama’s Disastrous Iraq Policy,” 2.

⁴¹ Gordon, *Endgame*, 290, 303, 363.

⁴² Peter Beinart, “Obama’s Disastrous Iraq Policy,” 3.

⁴³ Carpenter, “Obama’s China Strategy is Doomed,” 1.

⁴⁴ Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” 3.

⁴⁵ Posen, *Restraint*, 95.

⁴⁶ Posen, *Restraint*, 95.

⁴⁷ Obama, *National Security Strategy 2010*, 43.

⁴⁸ Harner, “Time for Honesty and Change In Obama’s Failed China Policy,” 2.

⁴⁹ Lynch, “Obama Faulted for Having Fewer Experts on China Policy,” 1.

⁵⁰ Carpenter, “Obama’s China Strategy is Doomed,” 1-3.

⁵¹ Kupchan, *After Pax Americana*, 65.

⁵² For an expansive discussion see Kissinger’s *World Order*.

⁵³ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military Power of the People’s Republic of China 2007*, 7. Additional information can be found in <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/24-character.htm>. The rationale was coined in Deng Xiaoping’s 24-Characters (eventually 28-Character), which stresses not seeking leadership. Even though the current Chinese strategy has become more active in the last decade, they still hold this to be a cornerstone of their strategy, a tenet consistent with Confucian thought.

⁵⁴ Carpenter, Carpenter, “Obama’s China Strategy is Doomed,” 3.

⁵⁵ Ferguson, *WANTED: A Grand Strategy for America*, 4.

⁵⁶ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 143. The Center for New American Security (CNAS) led a similar forum, titled Solarium II, in 2008. Attended by many strategic experts, this forum resulted in multiple strategic thought pieces outlining a way ahead for American grand strategy. However, the lack of Presidential endorsement reduced the effectiveness of implementing the recommendations and revitalizing American grand strategy. Find more information at <http://www.cnas.org/content/american-grand-strategy-solarium-part-1#.VNUp4HmKCIe>.

⁵⁷ Posen, *Restraint*, 60-62.

⁵⁸ Porter, “Isolationist heresies: strategy and the curse of slogans,” 19.

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